

But it knows that a number of men have been licensed and ordained by New York Presbytery that it would not have in its ministry because of their unevangelical views, and it does not know how many of these men there may be. It knows that a number of young men from various Presbyteries have attended Union Seminary and have imbibed its dangerous and destructive teachings and have gone into the Presbyterian ministry, and it does not know how many of them there are.

Come to think of it, these are the very things that have made us, and a good many others, afraid of or afraid for our dearly beloved Presbyterian Church. We do not know how much of this sort of thing has gone on within our bounds. We do not believe that a very great deal of it is to be found, but we frankly confess that we do not know how much there is of it, and so we have felt considerable fear and solicitude. We believe that the great head and heart, the great bulk and body of our Presbyterian Church is absolutely sound in the faith, loyal to Jesus Christ, believing in his deity and atonement, in the inspired verity of the Scriptures, and in the office work of the Holy Spirit. If there be exceptions here and there they are in the minority so small that they can not destroy or seriously threaten the integrity and loyalty of the body.

Here is where the movement will break down this time, if it breaks down. Union Seminary and its defenders and friends have done an incalculable injury to the Presbyterian Church. Association with and espousal of it means nothing safe or wholesome to those who are evangelical. The Christian Observer, of Louisville, one of the strongest papers of the Southern Presbyterian Church, says that wisdom and tact, to say the least, would have suggested that such an overture should have come from some other Presbytery than New York, that has given such expressions of doctrinal unfaithfulness, and asks whether the Presbytery, before adopting the overture, approved by formal action the deliverances of the General Assembly of last May as to the essential doctrines of God's word.

Here is the center and essence of the whole situation. We believe it is the understanding with New York Presbytery that henceforth it is to stand for what is evangelical, but as plain as the sun in the heavens is the fact that it can do more for Presbyterian reunion in one minute by the adoption of a paper affirming its absolute adherence to the essential evangelical faith, its intention to refrain from inducting into the ministry men who are unsound, and its determination to stand for the peace and welfare of the Church of Christ rather than for the upbolstering of Union Seminary, than it can in all the months before it in the way of overtures that are likely to fall on deaf ears because of distrustful hearts.

#### THE DECLINE OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH AND SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR ITS RISE.

Diagnosticians are well agreed that the country church is sick and dying. Various prescriptions have been given, and, needless to remark, it is far easier to prescribe the remedy than it is to administer the dose.

The country church is an institution that we can ill afford to give up. Four-fifths of the South's population is rural. Six out of every seven ministers are furnished by the country church. Aside from its necessity as a spiritual force, it is sociologically a major factor in the life and ideals of the rural community.

There are conditions which obtain in the rural communities that make for the decline of the country church.

The superior commercial and social advantages of the cities and towns have lured large numbers of families and individuals, more especially the young men, from the country. Thus the city has profited in virile manhood at the expense of the country. At the beginning of the nineteenth century less than four per cent of the population lived in the city; by the middle of the century it had increased to twelve per cent; at the present time more than forty-six per cent of the population dwells in the cities. The drain of the country districts of its people is apparent, and the material that might be in the country church has migrated to the city.

The inferior school advantages of the rural districts have driven many families to the cities and towns. Parents who are blessed with children and have no ambition for their education, rarely, if ever are mainstays in the church. Parents who have ambition to give their children educational advantages will make the necessary sacrifices, even to the leaving of a comfortable rural home and farm. The result very often is a move to the adjacent town or city.

The country spends only \$12.50 on each pupil of the school, while the city expends \$30.78. The sessions in the rural schools are short, the grades are low, and the child of the country is woefully circumscribed in his educational advantages. Much valuable material for the country church is thus forced into the towns and cities.

The growth of landlordism as a system of farming has done much to rob the country church of its best material. The owner of the land rents his estates while himself and his family reside in the nearest town or city. The institutions of the country where his support and monied interests really are, do not have his personal and financial aid, for he thinks of himself as no longer a resident of the community. A due portion of the farm income must be used to support the town institutions that furnish him his advantages. Few farmers consider themselves sufficiently well-to-do to make contributions for the support of two sets of institutions. The prevailing outcome is that the institutions of the rural districts suffer the loss.

The rural church is further impoverished as to its material by the tenantry that occupies the farms under the landlord system. The tenant has no real nexus of identification with the community and its beneficent interests in which he lives. "No land, no man" is the just caricature which he has won for himself. His interests are selfishly localized. He farms his acreage for financial gain only.

The tenant as a class is unstable and they do not make dependable churchmen. Farmers who do not own their homes rarely have such an interest in the church that they will make sacrifices for its worship and work. If ever a tenant may be persuaded to attend the worship of his nearest church one Sabbath of the month, there will be some supposedly compelling necessity which takes him for a visit to his relatives and his wife's relatives, his friends and his wife's friends the remaining Sabbaths of the month. Statistics show that forty-four per cent of the tenant class never go to church, seventy-eight per cent of the hired class do not attend worship; of farmers owning twenty acres of land sixty-five per cent never attend religious worship. The percentage of church attendance increases with the land acreage possessed until the farmer owns

three hundred acres, and then declines as the acreage increases.

The tenant system affects the South more than it does other sections of our country. Fifty per cent of all the farm lands in the South is cultivated by tenants, and forty per cent of the farmers are negroes.

The passing away of the "household farm," giving place to a ruinous landlordism and tenantry has worked havoc to the country church.

The marked individualism of farmers as a class has militated against the progress of the country church. This trait of character, found in the farmer, is, in part, a development due to his environment. Of necessity he lives in isolation. He thinks for himself and trains himself to depend upon his own judgment. The spirit of independence develops to the extent that it is difficult for him to co-operate with other men. Brotherhoods of locomotive engineers, firemen, and railway conductors, co-operative organizations of bankers, merchants, traveling salesmen, barbers, and artisans of the many trades, are maintained with ease and profit. Farmers, however, have enjoyed a very limited success in their alliances and co-operative organizations. And is not the failure to be accounted for, in a large measure, by the development of individualism in the character?

What an individual practices in his current life, he necessarily and unconsciously carries over into his religion life. The farmer brings into his church life an independency that militates against the growth and development of the church. Effectual organization is made more difficult. Approved policies and methods which are new to the individual country church and that swerve from the "time-honored custom of the fathers" are unnecessarily delayed and frequently permanently blocked because a unanimity that warrants the adoption and use of them cannot be had.

There are conditions that obtain in the country church that make for its decline.

The country church is now reaping the fruits of past dereliction by reason of inadequate service in ministering to the growing needs of the rural communities. Progress has been manifest in the rural districts. While the communities have moved forward with the onward push of the times, the churches have remained still. Nor has the country church kept apace with the onward push of the church at large. Oftentimes different denominations have overlapped as to their fields of activity and they have consumed energy and life upon one another in sectarian strifes to the woeful neglect of the community to be ministered to. The rural church has failed to measure up to its task in answering to the more complex needs of an enlarging civilization. The gospel message is ever the same in substance, yet it has a flexibility in its presentation that gives it a compelling attractiveness to every age and circumstances. The rural church has been remiss in seizing its opportunity and in discharging its obligation. Its message has been effete and lifeless.

The country church has seriously suffered decline by reason of a transient and non-resident ministry. Resident pastors of the country churches are few. The minister and his family have their home in the adjacent town. He ministers on the Sabbath to the country congregation. His visits are hurried and confined solely to the Sabbath worship. Leave-taking is the first order of the day Monday morning. The people know him only in a professional way. His life and example have no point of contact with theirs. Preaching alone